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# The Emigrants' Stone

By

CLARA HOPPER





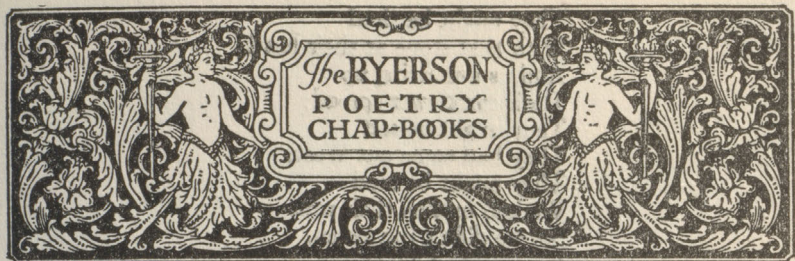
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## The Emigrants' Stone and Other Poems

*By Clara Hopper*



### THE EMIGRANTS' STONE

WHEN I was a child  
(With no sins to confess),  
My hair in two plaits,  
And a seersucker dress,  
'Mid the cornflowers blue,  
In a zigzag zone  
We all ran round  
The "Emigrant Stone."

We ran round once,  
We ran round twice,  
We clasped hands close  
And we ran round thrice,  
We ran round three  
And four and five  
And thanked our stars  
We were still alive!  
We ran round six  
And shivered in our shoes!  
We wondered what tricks  
An emigrant do-es  
When he comes to ha'nt  
A pig-tailed girl  
Who runs like an ant,  
In a seersucker swirl,  
And leaves his poor dead head  
In a whirl.

*Page One*



They might be tired  
With that stone at their head  
And us a-mussing up  
Their cornflower spread;  
They might be sad  
They had come out West;  
They might be mad  
We had broken their rest,  
So, we didn't run seven,  
For we liked Montreal—  
We didn't want to go  
To Heaven  
At all !

## II

The sweet fleet years  
Have slipped away,  
Though it seems 'twas only  
Yesterday,  
While St. Lawrence sang  
By its high dyked marls  
And the shad flies swarmed  
On Point St. Charles,  
That I saw men lie  
'Neath a careless sky,  
And the cornflowers neat  
Nid-nodding at their feet.

Oh, it's now I'm knowing  
(As, all alone,  
I dream and dream  
Of that Emigrants' Stone,  
Of the weary men,  
Sick, dying alone  
And never a soul  
To cry "Ochone!  
Ochochancee!  
Aw, the sad salt sea!")  
Well I'm knowing each sighed  
For a well-loved scene—  
His mother . . .  
Puffing on her old dudeen—  
Now I know they thought long  
For a sweet colleen  
With her creel a-dripping  
With the carrageen.

Ah, yes! they dreamed  
Just like me,  
Of vanished blisses;  
In their misery  
By the unspanned river  
With the stars above,  
Of old-time days . . .  
And ways . . .  
And love . . .

Ah, Memory!  
Oh, Life's fleet joys!  
Oh, the young dear days  
Of my girls and boys! . . .  
Oh, dear Peter,  
You've got the key!  
You've let them in  
Don't lock out me  
Now that I'm old  
And worn and thin  
(A whiff might bear me  
Over the whin),  
With a quavery voice  
With a crack in the middle  
Like the resinless tones  
Of an old brown fiddle.  
Old!—and weary!—  
Peter, deary,  
Mete me a measure  
Of leisure  
In Heaven—  
I'm tired of pleasure,  
Tired of sin,  
I've run round seven—  
Let me in!

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Many years ago, in Point St. Charles, Montreal, between the canal and the railway tracks leading to Victoria Bridge, there stood a large boulder. It marked the grave of numbers of Irish emigrants, victims of ship's fever, and was a never-ending source of interest and superstitious awe to the children who played around it. They called it The Emigrant Stone, and firmly believed that to run round it seven times would result in some dire calamity—even death—to the daring.



## MEMORIES

LITTLE I thought in the long ago  
When we swung 'neath the hawthorn tree  
(Tom was brother to Marion Flo,  
John was brother to me)  
That they would grow up and she would grow up  
And all go over the sea,  
And naught would be left of the long ago  
But the old haw-tree—and me.

The pies we baked of the scarlet haws!  
And the mansions made with stones!  
Taunting the rook with his raucous caws,  
Our missiles were pine-tree cones . . .  
But they grew up, and she grew up,  
And all sailed over the sea,  
And nothing is left of the long ago  
But the old haw-tree—and me.

The tales we told of our ventures bold  
With a valorous mien and tense!  
(Our daring moods soon took to the woods  
When Bess mooded over the fence.)  
But John grew up—and Tom grew up—  
A nurse was Marion Flo,  
And nothing is left but the old haw-tree—  
And me—of the long ago.

Little we thought swinging high and low  
In the flowery boughs of the haws,  
Three would fall to a foreign foe,  
And one would weep because  
My brother grew up—and Tom . . . grew up . . .  
And all sailed over the sea.  
Oh, if they all were children still,  
With the hawthorn tree—and me!

## IT WAS THE TIME WHEN LILACS BLOOMED

DEER live in the wildwood  
Beyond the carp of care;  
Eagles in an eyrie  
High in the fending air.

Larks live in the wilderness;  
Light lives in the dawn;  
Ennui dwells at even  
In a weary woman's yawn.

Color dwells in sunsets;  
Sadness with the dove;  
Beauty lives forever  
In faces that we love.

Love lives in the child's heart;  
Sound lives in the sea  
Since chaos—but memory  
Lives in the lilac tree.



## THEN AND NOW

SANS mistletoe they scarce did kiss  
In days more circumspect than this;  
The maids demure were so sedate,  
For chaperons enthroned in state  
Blocked every road to bliss:

But, here's the lucid emphasis—  
'Twas just a charming artifice  
Lest bashful pairs go celibate  
Sans mistletoe!

Romance must surely weep at this  
(But oh, 'tis sweet if 'tis remiss!):  
Today's maid meets him at the gate,  
She takes the flowers and chocolate,  
And proffers the expected kiss!—  
Sans mistletoe.



## TREE-SONGS

TO laugh, to frolic, and to sing sweet songs  
Is but the nature of the fetterless:  
Earth cannot silence, like some stern abbess,  
Her wild cascades, nor bind in grim duress—  
Song, like the sunshine, to the free belongs.

More sweet than notes of tinkling waterfalls  
Are the soft tones of wind-stirred aspen trees  
That swish and rustle when some faint, pale breeze  
Silters their garments; all their melodies  
Soothe us to slumber as the poppy calls:

Aspens all anchored to the fett'ring clay,  
Wedded to matter, yearning for the heights  
Ethereal—distant as the Dolomites—  
Still croon their tree-songs 'neath the stars o' nights,  
Loosing cramped souls from out the gyves of day.



## FIELDS

WISE and potent,  
Quiet lie,  
Gazing at  
The moody sky;  
Like an ancient  
Artisan,  
Waiting there  
Since time began,  
At the whim  
Of Master Man.

Lend a bushel  
Or a grain  
To a hillock  
Or a plain,  
They will take  
Your measured gold  
And pay you back  
A hundred fold.



Give them barley,  
Give them corn,  
Hips or haws  
Of rose or thorn,  
Fluff of thistle  
Zephyr borne,  
Anything,  
From anyone  
Underneath  
The shining sun,  
They will mother  
Any waif,  
Cover it  
And keep it safe.

Fields are generous!  
Fields are sweet:  
If you dress  
And keep them neat  
They will bring you  
Rye and wheat.  
Though you harrow  
Till you tire  
They will heap you  
"Coals of fire."  
Though you plough them  
Till they're sore  
They will only  
Bring you more!  
Overlook them—  
Leave them fallow—  
They will bring you  
Mint and mallow.

Fields are honest,  
Fields are human,  
Fields are patient  
As a woman;  
Sweet with blossoms  
Children find,  
Fields are generous  
And kind.  
By their deeds  
They stand revealed;  
What is better  
Than a field?



## THE SHEEP

WHENE'ER the breath of March is redolent  
Of garden loam and sodden woodsy mould,  
Like wintered sheep aweary of the fold,  
Fretting for freedom as in prison pent,  
Sniffing adventure on the telltale breeze,  
My thoughts rush out—not pell-mell, all together,  
But singly, one by one, when the bell-wether  
Has cleared the gap within the hedging fence  
That marks to-day from past experience.

Then one goes gambolling down a cinder walk  
Scoring a greensward in the memoried east  
Where tall white jonquils stare, sway daffodils—  
Food for the soul and for the eyes a feast!

And one goes skipping in that garden old  
Where pansies blossom with a heart of gold;  
Wide-eyed innocents, marvellous in hue:  
Saucy yellow, amber, amethyst, and blue.

One frisks nimbly where are tender tips  
Of peeping peonies that will riot presently  
And drug the dazzled air with their sweet, sweet lips,  
As giant roses, or a fair lady  
More ravishing than—anything you please!

So all day long my browsing sheep go free, fed  
Now on swelling cones of the purple lilac,  
Or flowering currant rich in gold as any Shylock,  
Till night's chill shade creeps down on the old homestead.

Though sweet the day that tempts to truant flight,  
My straggling flock come herded home at night,  
Content, to wonted rest and sleep within the fold—  
The fending fold of fireside, love, and candle-light.



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*Lorne Pierce—Editor*

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